

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A charge removing unit is provided in order to control the surface potential of an image bearing element by removing charge from a surface of the image bearing element before a toner image is

5 transferred from the image bearing element to a transfer medium.

Surface potential controlling units are provided upstream of a contact area between the image bearing element and the transfer medium in order to control the surface potential of the transfer medium so that a toner on the image bearing element does not shift to the transfer

10 medium.